

## AMATEUR CARD SHARPERS

## CASES SOCIETY DISPOSES OF WITHOUT SCANDAL.

Methods by Which Unfair Players Are Detected in Clubs and Private Houses—Experts Who Are Called in When Too Much Luck Excites Suspicion.

Every now and then one hears the echo of some rumor about some person or persons suspected of using unfair methods at the card table. Sometimes it is nothing but a question which is asked here and there: "Did you ever notice anything peculiar about their play?" or else it is, "How is it that Mrs. Hootin always has such luck at bridge?"

Sometimes it is a remark, made in strict confidence to the effect that it is certainly peculiar that Mr. and Mrs. O'Trigger always insist upon playing as partners, and that they almost invariably win. Sometimes it is a direct accusation that a certain couple use private signals; but there is another side to the matter of which less is heard than of the rumors.

It is well known that the big stores employ detectives to watch their counters. It is a matter of common knowledge that many hostesses in New York employ private detectives, who are apparently guests, to guard the interests of those they entertain, as well as their own silverware, whenever they give an entertainment, which brings together a large number of people that unbidden guests might slip in among the rest.

It is not so generally known that the managing directors of clubs in which cards are played for high stakes sometimes call in the services of experts in advantage playing if they suspect anything wrong in the card room. Many women in New York who give bridge parties also know where to find men who are thoroughly informed on every trick of the card sharper's trade and who can be introduced as guests and mix freely with the others without exciting any suspicion that they are there simply for the purpose of watching some person who is under suspicion.

There are two men in particular in New York who make a business of safeguarding the interests of honest card players in the clubs and elsewhere. One of them is a man well known in his way of business, who would never be suspected of knowing as much as he does of the card sharper's tricks. About the last thing that any one would suspect on meeting him at a club or in a private house would be that he was there for the purpose of ferreting out a card sharper from among the guests.

The other man is a professional gambler, a man of fine appearance and polished manners, but who must always be presented under a false name.

Many of the men and women who are in the habit of practicing some little advantage at the card table, confidently imagining that no one ever suspects them, have been marked down by one or other of these two men and are on the blacklist of more than one hostess and club manager. No one accuses them; no one says anything to them. Those in the know avoid them, and that is all.

If any of these amateur sharpers who have been working their tricks successfully and without apparent discovery have remarked that they are not invited to houses they were once welcome to or that certain people seem to avoid cutting into the same table with them at bridge parties where the play is for stakes it is more than probable that they have been watched and marked when they least suspected it and that their methods have been carefully noted in writing for future reference. There are men and women who pay for this information about their acquaintances but keep it to themselves, not even a smile betraying the fact that the little game of the sharper is no secret to them.

## GENTLE HINTS.

Upon occasion of course the temptation is too much for the man who sees himself being looked in the most clumsy manner by some person whom he has never warned against. Not long ago such a man, who may be called Mr. Cornley, found himself at the bridge table with a couple whom he had never met before but whom he had been privately warned against, although they moved freely on the fringe of society. Keeping his eyes open, Mr. Cornley observed the little trick that was played on one of the amateur sharper's deals. Instead of making any remark or protest he put forth his hand under the table very gently and tickled the card sharper on the knee.

In answer to the look of astonishment and reproach which he received Mr. Cornley smiled sweetly and looked his man squarely in the eye. When the rubber was finished Mr. Cornley regretted extremely that his adversaries found it necessary to go home so early, but his smile had lost none of its sweetness.

A certain hostess in New York was quietly informed that one of her guests was in the habit of dealing in a peculiar way. Seating herself at the same table with the suspected woman, the hostess watched her closely when she dealt, and then this brief colloquy ensued:

"Didn't you drop a card, my dear?" asked the hostess.

"Why, no. I think not," looking on the floor.

"Then perhaps you took a card that did not belong to you?" with a smile of ravishing sweetness.

"Why, no. How could I?"

"Then the deal is perfectly regular, is it?" and the hostess smiled again while the dealer turned crimson. She probably went home not quite sure what those questions really meant, but a guilty conscience can safely be left to work out its own conclusions.

## A CASE AT A CLUB.

The manner in which those who make a business of detecting amateur card sharpers proceed with their investigations is simple. The secret of their success depends of course upon the fact that none but those who employ them suspects their business.

A case which occurred in New York some years ago will illustrate the method. The committee of a certain club in which whist, cards and hearts were very popular games heard certain rumors about one of the members who was particularly lucky in finding wenzels in the skat when he dealt in a three hand game, and always held the deuce, trey and four when he was playing hearts.

This man was apparently above suspicion, being connected with one of the big colleges and belonging to several good clubs. He may be called Dr. Fox.

A member of the committee invited a Mr. Buskirk to dine at the club and after dinner took him into the card room to play. Nothing was said to Mr. Buskirk as to what man was under suspicion. He was not even told whether the man was in the card room at the time.

All he was asked to do was to tell the

committee if he saw anything wrong anywhere. If he wished to say anything to his host in private he was to give a certain signal and an excuse would be made for him to leave the card table for a time.

After playing at different tables for an hour or so Mr. Buskirk gave the signal. Alone with three members of the committee in another room he rapidly explained with the assistance of a pack of cards how Dr. Fox managed to get the small hearts at the bottom of the pack and deal them to himself and suggested that the same process was probably used in getting the jacks into the skat.

Armed with this explanation the members of the committee returned to the card room and unobtrusively watched the doctor's dealing, but although they had just been shown exactly what he did and the motions had been slowly and carefully gone through by Mr. Buskirk they could not see when the doctor did the trick. When they met again in the committee room later they all agreed that none of them had seen anything out of the way and that Mr. Buskirk must be mistaken.

The next day two of these committee men made it a point to sit at the same table with the doctor and to play against him, but although they were morally sure that they were being cheated and had been shown just how it was done they could not see it even when they were looking right at it.

As one man's word is as good as another's in such affairs it is always necessary to have more than one accuser, so other members of the club were taken into the confidence of the committee and finally one or two were found who had eyes sharp enough to follow the doctor's movements. Accusation, exposure and expulsion from the club followed.

## "YOUR RESIGNATION HAS BEEN ACCEPTED."

At one of the best known card clubs in this country they do things with neatness and dispatch and no noise. The same Mr. Buskirk that exposed Dr. Fox observed that one of the players in this club always shuffled the pack himself before spreading it out for partners and deal at bridge, and that he invariably cut an ace or a deuce which gave him the continual advantage of the first deal.

Closer attention disclosed that he shuffled these small cards within four or five of one end, top or bottom, of the pack, so that he knew that if he drew the fourth or fifth card when the pack was spread he would get an ace or a deuce. Even if another player got a lower card or tied him he was one of the partners that had the first deal.

Other little tricks, such as peeping at his left hand adversary's cards and marking the ace of hearts with his thumb nail, so that he knew to whom he dealt it every time it was his deal, were also noted as his advantages.

The secretary of this club, who is a man of decision and energy, asked only one question of Mr. Buskirk: "Are you willing to go before the board of directors and say to this man's face that you saw him do these things?" The answer being affirmative other members were taken into confidence. They watched. They were asked the same question by the secretary and they answered that they were willing.

The board of governors held a meeting and directed the club steward to tell the suspected gentleman the next time he rang the bell that his resignation had been accepted and to report what he had to say in reply.

The only reply he made was to look the steward in the eye for the fraction of a second and then to turn and walk down the steps. This man held a Colonel's rank in the army, had been on the Governor's staff and was a well to do manufacturer, but cheating at cards was in his blood.

There used to be a little poker party that met in one of the uptown hotels every Monday night in which the stakes were high enough for a winning or losing of \$2,000 or \$3,000 not to be unusual. One of the members of this set, which was made up of rich men and their friends, was too consistent a winner to agree with the conception of probabilities entertained by another of the party, who may be called Mr. Crosby for short.

Crosby was one of the best fellows that ever lived and would not hurt any one's feelings for the world, neither would he breathe a hint of his misgivings to his friends. He got hold of one of the detectives already referred to and after dining him gave him \$1,000 in cash and asked him to sit in this poker game and play along, keeping his eyes open at the same time.

What happened is not known, although there are several accounts of the outcome going the rounds, but Crosby never played in that game again, and although he absolutely refused to give any reason for his withdrawal.

Among other things several Rockingham china door knobs, the pride of generations past, have fairly been given away and the very beautiful knob shown in the picture was purchased by an enter-

## A ROCKINGHAM DOOR KNOB.

Bought by a Lucky American in London for 31 Cents. Sold for \$25.

LONDON, May 19.—With the cutting through of new streets many ancient houses have been torn down in London. Some of them were once stately residences and boasted bits of fine old brass, valuable woodwork and door knockers so elaborately carved and wrought as to be things of beauty in themselves. In the hurry of getting rid of these old houses some wonderful pieces of age colored wood and articles of brass and china have been picked up by those on the watch for almost nothing.

Among other things several Rockingham china door knobs, the pride of generations past, have fairly been given away and the very beautiful knob shown in the picture was purchased by an enter-

prising American who was watching the dismantling and destruction of one of these houses. Thirty-seven cents was what the bystander paid for this door knob, as you can see.

Naturally the American was proud of his bargain and meant to keep it. He washed it carefully and put it in the place of honor in her room and wrote long letters about it to America.

Life in London is expensive for students and one day the American heard of a rich woman who wanted just that kind of Rockingham door knob to match a set for a drawing room, so she succumbed and sold her treasure for \$25. Now it is being used again in a beautiful drawing room furnished as nearly as possible to the way in which was followed when the Rockingham door knobs were first in vogue.

THE ROCKINGHAM CHINA DOOR KNOB.

for his absence the others seem to have got an inkling that there was something wrong and the game broke up. The suspected man is still a member of some of the best clubs, in which he plays bridge regularly, but with absolute fairness. Probably he learned his lesson, which is something few society card sharpers do.

## CAUGHT WITH WHISKEY AND MOLASSES.

Some years ago, before bridge had won so many players from the poker tables, there was a prominent business man in New York who had phenomenal luck in the draw. Playing against old timers as he did, they could not help remarking that he filled out two pairs or made three oftener than was good for the rest of the players.

A member of the party happened to mention the matter to a friend one day and was advised to call in the services of Mr. Buskirk, which he did. For some time Buskirk could not discover what was wrong, as the man's shuffling and dealing was that of the ordinary card player, and these society sharpers seldom resort to anything deeper than false shuffles or outs or located cards.

Upon examining the cards after the game was finished Buskirk found that all the aces and kings were very lightly scratched on the corners of the backs. He lightly was the work done that it required a very delicate touch to discover it and showed extraordinary work for an amateur advantage player.

Having studied these marks carefully, Buskirk found that they could be seen in a certain light if one of the marked cards lay on the top of the pack, as well as felt with the finger. The difficulty was to prove that the suspected man marked them or used the marks upon them, but the professional was equal to the demands of the occasion.

Having so arranged matters that a new pack of cards should be brought to the table at the beginning of the game and that several other new packs should be in readiness, Buskirk asked his friend to allow him to have a glass of whiskey and molasses on the table beside him, filled so full that it would slop over a little if jarred.

As soon as Buskirk found the aces and kings of the new pack were marked he would knock his glass of whiskey and molasses slightly, just enough to spill some more on the table, and then he would get some of his discard in the sticky mixture and call for a new pack.

After repeating this two or three times and assuring himself that he was right about the man who was marking the cards, which was done with the sharpened point of a thumb nail hardened with a certain chemical, Buskirk started his counterplot.

The suspected man dealt and opened a jackpot, drawing three cards. Buskirk gave his friend the sign agreed on to stay in and raise, observing at the same time that the dealer did not take the trouble to look over his draw before seeing the first raise.

After the second raise from Buskirk and his friend the dealer picked up his cards and skinned them over, as all poker players will when they want time to think a bit. His face immediately changed color and he looked so disconcerted that every one at the table remarked it. Without saying a word he threw up his hand and said he would pass out.

Buskirk at once demanded to know what the pot had been opened on and turned the dealer's cards face up, revealing a pair of kings, a deuce and two treys. At the same time the man who had brought Buskirk into the game carried out his part of the programme by holding his cards up to the light and remarking with well feigned astonishment:

"Why, these cards are marked!"

"Of course they are," rejoined Buskirk, instantly. "I don't know who marked the aces and kings, but I marked all the deuces and treys."

No one accused any one of doing anything wrong. The expression on the face of the suspected man was quite sufficient to tell him that he was in a bad way. He rose from the table and excused himself for leaving the game so abruptly, never to return, it dawned upon the others who were not in the secret that the great mystery of those lucky draws had been solved.

The same exposure comes to many men and women who fancy themselves secure from the possibility of detection. More than one woman who moves in what is called good society is marked down when she turns up her hand and is caught in the act of cheating. The rules under which she was built required this. The cabin was 6 feet 6 inches long, 3 feet 8 inches high and had two transoms or seats which were twenty inches wide, and between these two transoms was a space about 18 inches wide, which made the total area of the floor 9 square feet. By doubling up you could get into this cabin if not too tall, but care had to be taken in moving about in the cabin. Even when sitting on a transom your head was very close to the deck beams and a little carelessness might cause some soreness.

The owner looked with pride at the yacht and frequently visited the yard where it was built up to see that no harm came to it. He planned to have the yacht overhauled and painted white and looked forward to the season.

As has been said, he had never dreamed that the ownership of a yacht would make

## WHAT REALLY HAPPENED.

Man Who'd Been Out the Night Before Turns on His Anxieties.

This man, who rarely permits himself to become even slightly numbed by the fumes of highballs and such like, was tempted and fell one night last week.

On the following morning when he started for the office he possessed a sort of sheepish feeling. He dreaded to meet his friends, apprehending that they would tell him many things.

His apprehension was correct. They did tell him many things. "Oh!" gloated the first of the bunch he met, "but I s'pose maybe you weren't there with one of those riotous things or anything last night when I out your trail! Oh! I reckon maybe not!"

The victim had nothing to say. What could he say? All he could do was to shrivel and wait for the next.

Bawled the next as soon as the self-reproachful victim met him:

"Well, well, old half-hose, where did you come that twenty-four karat thing that you were lugging around last night? Say, it was a sky blue gem, with sixty-four facets, and the light it made almost blinded everybody on the Big Alley. Tush, tush—how darest behave so?"

The withered man could only turn his face away and silently repent of his sin. His anguish was too keen for expression.

Since he had to go about his business there was no dodging the others. The next he ran into had this to uncoil:

"Why, you old son of a whale, how did you manage to pick up that deck load that I saw you zigzagging around with last night, huh? Such dole!"

Losing weight at every step, the man plodded along, ineffectually striving to dodge 'em but never succeeding. The next plastered this on him:

"Sad stuff, old hawse! Sad indeed! You ought to flag it. When I ran into you you were hawling cobblestones at arc lights and all the time you were moaning

## FITTINGS FOR HIS YACHT

## NEW OWNER SUDDENLY FINDS HIMSELF FAMOUS.

Dealers Would Load His Boat With Engines, Planes, Anchors, Monogrammed Crockery and Sheets, Lighting Plants—Boat 18 Feet Long!

It was no dream. This man really owned a yacht. True, it was a small boat, but he had always wanted to be a captain, and in the yachting world an owner is a captain and entitled to sport two foul anchors on his cap and two stripes with trefail on the sleeves of his coat.

So this man was a captain. He could sail out on the deep as far as he dared in his small boat, could cruise away from the city and forget all his trials and tribulations while he battled with sea and wind, and could then anchor peacefully in some quiet harbor and sleep in the small cabin lulled by the music of the waves.

He had never imagined, though, how important a man becomes when he owns a real yacht. This he discovered after his name appeared in the Yacht Register. That book is a record of the yachts of the United States, and when this new yachtsman found that he was there and that he showed equally with Commodore Arthur Currier James, C. Oliver Gould, W. Butler Duncan, Jr., George J. Gould, Eugene Higgins and other owners of floating palaces he was delighted.

This register recorded that the New

him important, but he found before long that he had risen wonderfully in the estimation of others and soon began to get letters about his yacht, the writers making many suggestions.

One morning in his mail the yachtsman found a letter, well written and addressed to him personally. It was from the builder of a marine gasoline motor and told to what perfection the motor had been developed. Then it pointed out the advantages of having a small motor in a yacht in case it should be becalmed.

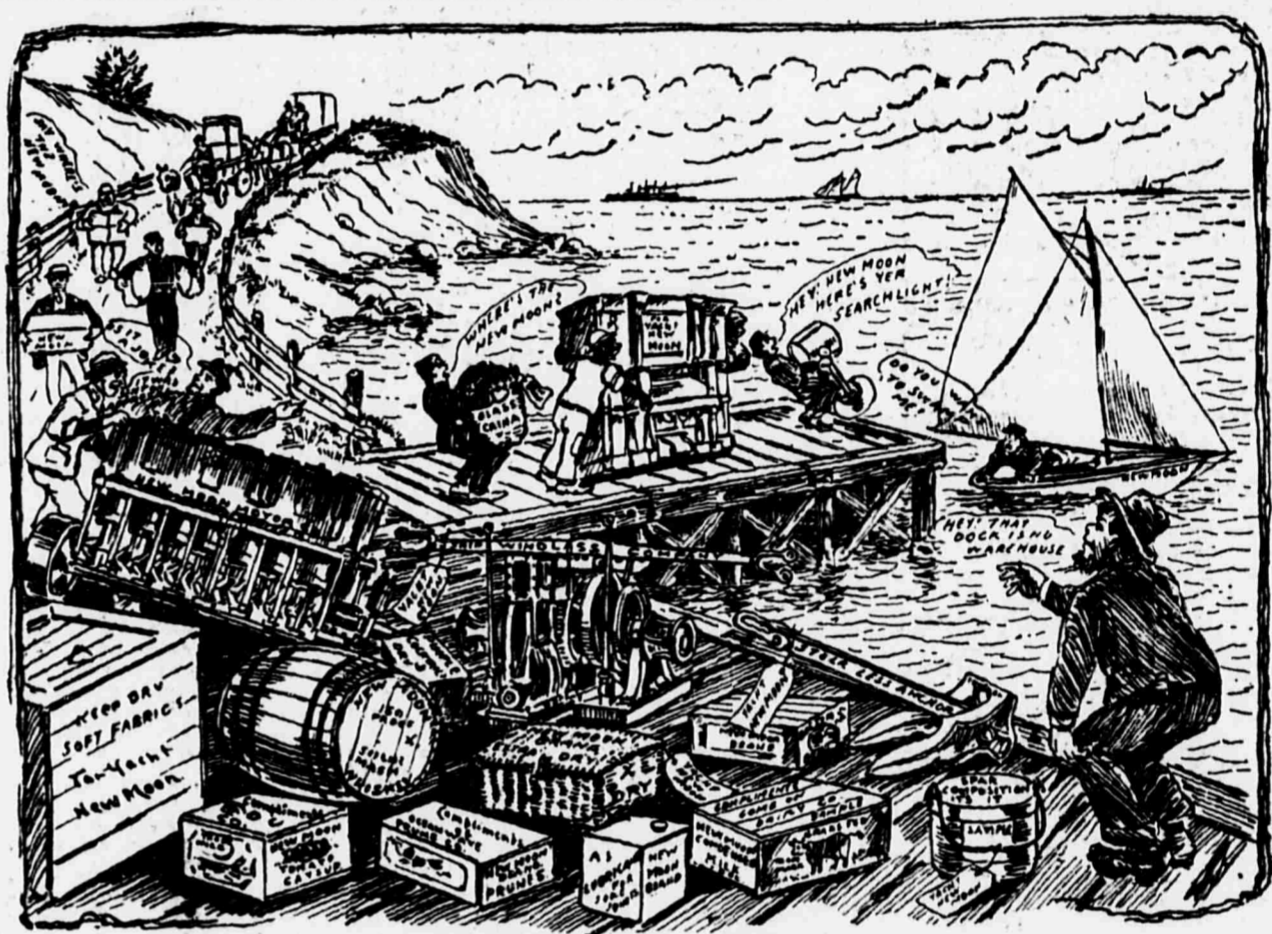
The yacht should be made an auxiliary, the letter said. The motor could easily be installed under the cockpit floor. It could be controlled by the man who was handling the tiller. The writer asked that he be allowed to furnish an estimate of the cost of installing a motor in the New Moon.

All this sounded very nice, but the yachtsman had been graduated in the old school. He was not in favor of the modern school of yachting, which has no use for sails. He wished to sail as Commodore Stevens did when he owned the schooner America and so he wrote to the motor builder thanking him for his suggestions so kindly made, but declined for the present to install a motor in the New Moon.

Not very long after this there was another letter for the yachtsman, a personal letter, and this time from the manager of a firm that makes player pianos.

This letter said that George J. Gould, Eugene Higgins, Col. Oliver H. Payne, Commodore Elbridge T. Gerry, W. K. Vanderbilt and many others had this particular piano on their yachts. It had given great satisfaction, which the writer could prove by testimonials.

The letter also said that King Edward the Czar of Russia, the German Emperor



"A TALE OF A TRAIL OF TROUBLE."

Moon, a keel sloop, was built of wood. Her dimensions were given as 28 feet 4 inches over all length, 18 feet 3 inches over the water line, 6 feet 6 inches beam and 4 feet 10 inches draught, and then listed in one column the names of the designer and the builder, in another the name of the owner, and then came the home port and a column for the clubs to which the owner belonged.

All this seemed very fine to the owner, and he paid \$6 for a copy of the register, that he might see the record and also study the names of those who were in his company in the book.

Now a yacht 18 feet long on the water line does not have much room. This particular craft was built for racing and so has been made rather small. Still the New Moon had a cabin. The rules under which she was built required this.

The cabin was 6 feet 6 inches long, 3 feet 8 inches high and had two transoms or seats which were twenty inches wide, and between these two transoms was a space about 18 inches wide, which made the total area of the floor 9 square feet. By doubling up you could get into this cabin if not too tall, but care had to be taken in moving about in the cabin. Even when sitting on a transom your head was very close to the deck beams and a little carelessness might cause some soreness.

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and other royalties were particularly pleased with their pianos which did so much to make life on board their yachts pleasant. The writer said that under separate cover he had sent one of his handsomely illustrated catalogues and had placed on the library of sending a representative to call on the yachtsman with a view to having a piano of the player kind installed on the New Moon.

This letter was received. This time the yachtsman was wondering. At first he wondered if the yacht he had seen named New Moon was really the New Moon he was the owner of. He related to believe that piano and engine builders would make the mistake of wanting to equip so small a yacht.

Then having assured himself that he really owned the 18 footer he wondered if it were not possible to have a piano on board, but by no stretch of imagination could he figure that a piano could be got into his small cabin and even if it could be placed there it was doubtful if the yacht would still keep afloat. So he had to tell the agent who called that he was not in the market for a piano.

This letter was received. This time it was from a firm which makes a specialty of china and glass for yachts. This letter, again addressed personally, said: "Recently we sent you a booklet, 'An Open Secret,' describing our special facilities for equipping yachts with china, glass and silver table services. We wish again to direct your attention to the fact that our broad experience in this particular class of work is at your disposal. We believe that we are in a better position than any other house in America to meet your requirements."

The letter then told of table service which bore monograms, crests, signals or colors and asked that the firm be allowed to execute a certain piece without any cost or obligation to the yachtsman and submit it feeling sure that the prices quoted would compel his interest.

Now this was something like a vessel capable of carrying what they sell.

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his flag and the flag of his club and the name New Moon on each piece he realized would be quite up to date. Then he realized again the size of his yacht. He had no galley and no china closets and so reluctantly the idea was given up.

A stockless anchor was the next thing offered, and again the yachtsman was interested. The fine holding qualities of this anchor were described and it was also explained that it was easily handled and easily stowed away. Later he realized that a twelve pound anchor attached to a thin rope was all he required and that a stockless anchor on the New Moon would put her bow down to the danger point.

Now every one knows that one of the troubles on a small sailing yacht is caused by the lamps that have to be used. It's a dirty job cleaning these lamps each morning and getting them ready for use. A lamp is necessary in the cabin, there must be a riding light for use when at anchor, and when under way at night side lights must be carried.

A suggestion that pleased the yachtsman came from a firm that wished to equip the New Moon with an acetylene plant. This letter told how a tank could be installed in the bow of the yacht or under the cabin floor and lights placed so that it would be as brilliant as day. As an extra inducement to use this plant it was shown that cooking could be done with the gas. Pictures of the fixtures were received and pictures of heating and cooking stoves.

Another firm sent elaborate pictures of the fixtures for the yacht, showing ways, stairways, pilot house and smoking room floored with its tiling and asked to be allowed to estimate on fitting the New Moon. Its advantages, so the letter said, were many. "His non-slippy features alone would recommend its use on boats, and the straining of the decks or vibration will not cause it to break or bulge," the letter said.

Following this came a suggestion from

a manufacturer of an electric searchlight operated by a storage battery. The writer said that the light of your boat," said the letter, "holding her with your right hand and having in your left a searchlight which you can point in any direction. If you are tells you that things are not going right at the motor you can, without losing control of the boat, flood the engine with light. If you want to signal to the shore or to another boat take this lamp and use it with the regulation code wigwag signals."

Another firm wanted to submit bids for fitting the yacht with a certain kind of the handsome wood paneling that could be used and submitted a catalogue. Still another wished to equip the yacht with handsome hangings and upholstery and another wanted to furnish the table and bed linen, all of which would bear the flag of the owner or his monogram.

Then came letters from spar makers, riggers, sail makers, pen and washmen. Others wanted to supply the yacht with the liquid refreshment the owner would need for himself and for the entertainment of his friends.

Now this yacht, the New Moon sails in a class which according to the rules must be handled altogether by amateurs, no professionals being allowed. One of the last letters received was by saying: "In the matter of uniforms for the crew of your yacht, if you have not been satisfied in the past we would be glad to furnish estimates."

The y